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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 ADDIS ABABA 001535

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STATE FOR AF AND AF/E FROM AMBASSADOR YAMAMOTO  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER  
CJTF-HOA AND USCENTCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/21/2032  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [ET](#) [US](#) [SO](#)  
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: BROKEN PROMISES, UNMET EXPECTATIONS --  
FIXING MIL-TO-MIL RELATIONS

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1534 (NOTAL)  
[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 1512 (NOTAL)  
[1](#)C. ADDIS ABABA 977 (NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASON: 1.4 (A), (B) AND (D)  
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INTRODUCTION  
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[1](#)1. (S/NF) U.S.-Ethiopian mil-to-mil relations, specifically security assistance, are currently facing their most difficult challenges in the eleven years the Ambassador has observed U.S.-Ethiopian relations. The deterioration is an accumulation of missteps, misunderstandings, and misreadings of the intentions of each other. Yet, it comes when our political and economic relations are sound, and military intelligence and information-sharing are expanding. We share common interests and objectives in Somalia, counterterrorism, regional stability, and domestic reforms. Ethiopia has become one of the largest troop-contributing countries for peacekeeping operations in Africa, sending troops to Liberia and Burundi. Ethiopia has given us unprecedented access to all information on Somalia and foreign detainees captured in Somalia. The Ethiopians have detained suspects in Somalia at our request. They have gone after suspected targets in Somalia at our request. They have provided force protection in Somalia, again at our request and that of the African Union and other actors.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) What troubles the Ethiopians has been the press leaks in Washington over the AC-130 gunship strikes launched from Ethiopia into Somalia, and CNN reporter Barbara Starr's speculation about U.S. military training of Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) troops fighting in Somalia. Both angered the Ethiopian military, which felt both programs were important but decided to end the AC-130 basing and close U.S. Central Command Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa's (CJTF-HOA) Hurso and Bilate training camps. Western press reports concluding that the ENDF lacks capability, and can only function in Somalia under U.S. military direction, particularly soured mil-mil relations.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) The Security Assistance Program lacks funding and

elicits the biggest unfulfilled promises in our mil-mil relations. Human rights and other conditions ending military assistance programs add to the sorry state of our mil-mil relations. These include:

- Cancellation of two C-130s in 1998 over Ethiopia's conflict with Eritrea;
- Suspension of delivery of two dozen HMMWVs in response to violence after the 2005 parliamentary elections;
- Unmet promises to repair two C-130s, and;
- Most recently, and possibly the most egregious unmet promise, is the expected closure of the U.S.-initiated Ethiopian Defense Command and Staff College after only two years of training, due to lack of funds.

The failure after seven years to repair the C-130s, and closure of the war college, have so infuriated the Ethiopian military that the call is for Ethiopia to make China, and to a lesser extent Israel, their major military relationship.

¶4. (S/NF) But the Ethiopian military also bear responsibility for the deteriorating relations. The change in CHODs (Chief of Defense) in 2001 saw the replacement of a highly popular CHOD (Lieutenant General Tsadkhan Gebretensae) with a highly political CHOD (Lieutenant General Samora Yonus) who has fired senior officers who pose threats to his authority. This has led to the departure of highly qualified leaders and created an ethnic imbalance, with more politically connected generals. The new CHOD is thoroughly disagreeable, and makes no secret of his adoration for China, which supported the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebels who currently control the government, while the U.S. opposed the rebels.

¶5. (S/NF) To get relations back on track, we need to keep old

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promises and make no new promises we cannot keep. DOD and other agencies need to come up with the funds to pay for the C-130 repairs and do it quickly, and to pay for the continuation of the staff and command college and do it quickly. Ethiopia has provided critical support, and we, specifically DOD and DIA, must clearly demonstrate support for Ethiopia, through funding and providing the DATT office with the bare essential staff, including for the security assistance office. END INTRODUCTION.

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A RESPONSIVE PARTNER  
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¶6. (S/NF) Over the past eleven years, Ethiopia has provided unprecedented military support and assistance, sharing closely shared values and common objectives. Through civil affairs and peacekeeping training, the Ethiopians have become one of the largest troop-contributing countries in Africa for PKO operations, varying from second to fourth in force size. They have contributed to operations in Burundi and Liberia, and volunteered troops for Afghanistan and Iraq, though cost was too prohibitive.

¶7. (S/NF) After 9/11, Ethiopia went out of its way to support the U.S. The Ethiopian military worked with Puntland to detain and question suspected terrorists, keeping us informed of their activities. After Ethiopia's incursion into Somalia in December 2006, Ethiopia's military gave us complete and unprecedented access to information they obtained in Somalia, as well as access to information from foreign fighters detained in Somalia or in Kenya. Information-sharing is robust, with U.S. military intelligence working closely with our Ethiopian counterparts, forming one of the strongest and most mutually beneficial relationships on the continent.

¶8. (S/NF) The ENDF provided force protection in Somalia for African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops, in response to Ugandan military requests as well as requests from the African Union. The U.S. Mission to the African Union (USAU) closely followed up on Ethiopian support for AMISOM. The

ENDF was asked by the African Union and U.S. for help at Mogadishu's airport and seaport, as contract aircraft supported AMISOM and ships came to Somalia with Ugandan equipment. During the recent visit to Baidoa of the Assistant Secretary, the ENDF provided force protection. The ENDF has been responsive to requests not just from the U.S. but also the African Union and others.

¶9. (S/NF) Ethiopia signed without hesitation a SOFA agreement, ACSA accord, and an Article 98 provision. They assigned officers to CJTF-HOA in Djibouti. They assigned liaison officers for civil affairs programs and projects, as well.

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ISRAEL AND CHINA ARE MODEL ALLIES  
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¶10. (S/NF) Ethiopian military personnel note the reliability and dependability of the Israeli and China connections. They never promise much but always deliver on what little they do promise, and without human rights and other conditions. During the conflict in 1998 to 2000 between Eritrea and Ethiopia, Israel provided information-sharing and maintenance assistance for Ethiopia's aircraft; the Chinese provided supplies and equipment. In contrast, the U.S. canceled C-130 deliveries and ended mil-to-mil training.

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WHAT WENT WRONG: GENESIS OF MISTRUST  
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¶11. (S/NF) C-130 ISSUE: In 1996, we worked to provide four C-130 B models to help with strategic lift of peacekeeping contingents. When the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia broke out in June 1998, only two C-130s had been provided. The remaining two were canceled and sent to another country, and the spare parts package for the two that were delivered was

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suspended.

¶12. (S/NF) In December 2000 after the Algiers Peace Accord was signed between Eritrea and Ethiopia, U.S. military personnel promised consistently that spare parts would be provided to the Ethiopian military. In 2007, an assessment team finally arrived in Ethiopia. The cost included USD13 million to repair one C-130 and USD6 million to repair the other. DOD had no funds, and the State Department was tasked to pay out of FMF and Section 1206 funds, which were insufficient to meet needs.

¶13. (S/NF) DEFENSE COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE ISSUE: Another problem is the newly established Ethiopian Defense Command and Staff College, set up by DOD using FMF monies to meet a critical Ethiopian need to professionalize its military. We spent USD6 million to establish the school two years ago and to pay for five contractors as teachers. Currently some 100 Ethiopian officers are training at the two-year program. The problem is that we do not have the USD3 million to pay for five contractors past November 2007. While DOD has identified U.S. Army reserve personnel to teach at the college, no unit or command has volunteered to pay for their mobilization. Using U.S. reservists would allow us to use FMF, much cheaper than paying USD3 million to contractors. The closure of the college, an initiative DOD and the USG urged Ethiopia to adopt, will add to Ethiopia's mistrust and feeling that the U.S. is not committed to Ethiopia or appreciative of contributions made thus far by the Ethiopians.

¶14. (S/NF) U.S. PLACES CONDITIONS: What disturbs the Ethiopian military are human rights and other conditions set by the U.S.:  
-- Ethiopia seeks restoration of the remaining two C-130 transport planes canceled in 1998. Ethiopia has had to rent planes to send troops off to peacekeeping operations. The C-130 would reduce their cost.

-- In 2005, the U.S. suspended delivery of two dozen HMMWVs due to the use of HMMWVs to transport military to quell the violent demonstrations after the 2005 election. The CHOD was exasperated that there was no alternative to using the military to bring order, since the police were overwhelmed. It was up to the military and their action was very limited. The lack of HMMWVs hampered their operations in Somalia. As a result of the suspension, the CHOD has placed the half dozen HMMWVs already delivered in storage and ordered that they never be used. While human rights are critical to the U.S., a brief moratorium on delivery of the HMMWVs would have served our needs better than a cancellation.

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WHY ALL THE PRESS LEAKS?  
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¶15. (S/NF) The Ethiopian military was angered by press leaks in Washington. AC-130 gunships operated from Ethiopia with full concurrence from the host nation. After the January 7 and January 22 airstrikes in Somalia, the Ethiopians were fully supportive of the action. But after leaks in Washington from DOD sources, the Ethiopian military suspended AC-130 operations.

¶16. (S/NF) CNN reporter Barbara Starr reported that U.S. military camps in Ethiopia were training the ENDF troops that entered Somalia. The report gave the impression that Ethiopia was incapable of conducting Somali operations on its own and was closely directed by the U.S. That infuriated the proud Ethiopian force. It is speculated that one reason for the closures of CJTF-HOA Contingency Operating Locations (COL) Hurso and Bilate may be Ethiopia's sensitivity over the characterization of Ethiopia's military as weak and incapable.

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MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF INTENTIONS  
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¶17. (S/NF) Ethiopia has used mil-mil relations to send

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signals of dissatisfaction. In December 2004, the U.S. was the only country among the Witnesses to the Algiers peace accord not to welcome the Prime Minister's five-point plan to end the border dispute with Eritrea. The plan was based on a U.S. proposal but with the added note that Ethiopia agreed to the Boundary Commission's decision on the border only "in principle." The U.S. made it clear in private that Ethiopia must accept the decision without condition in accordance with the Algiers Accord.

¶18. (S/NF) The problem stemmed from miscommunications between the Embassy and Washington, and a failure to report on the Prime Minister's private message on the U.S. proposals. When the GOE made its announcement, the GOE was shocked at the cold shoulder from the U.S. In retaliation, the GOE temporarily withdrew its liaison officers at CJTF-HOA's Camp Lemonier and refused to attend the Independence Day reception at the U.S. Ambassador's residence. It was not until much later that this misunderstanding was resolved and corrected. Eventually, in 2006, the GOE came out with a revised five-point plan but with the condition "in principle" eliminated. However, hard feelings still remain.

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CHANGING OF THE CHODS  
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¶19. (S/NF) Ethiopia also bears responsibility for the misunderstandings. The former CHOD, Lieutenant General Tsadkhan Gebretensae, was extremely close to the U.S., and

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problems in the relations were always easily handled and

resolved. Further, Tsadkhan was beloved by his troops, and he commanded a very broad multi-ethnic/clan military. He practiced with his troops, ate with his troops, and cared deeply for the welfare of his troops. He was considered the brightest and the most strategic thinker of any CHOD we dealt with in the region. His desire to go to Asmara and replace President Isaias during the war with Eritrea led the Prime Minister to replace Tsadkhan with the more quiet yet more politically savvy Samora. Though a Muslim from the Prime Minister's home region of Tigray, Samora had none of the troop adoration of Tsadkhan. Samora fired all competitors for his job, many of whom were revered and were exceptional commanders. More important, the careful ethnic balance that Tsadkhan had established was broken with Samora selecting

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only loyalists, primarily from Tigray. But like Tsadkhan, Samora cares deeply for his troops and pushes hard on what he feels is best for the future of the ENDF.

¶20. (S/NF) But underlying Samora's psyche is his adoration for China and, to a degree, Israel. It was China that helped the fledgling TPLF rebel movement while the U.S. opposed it. Samora considers the Chinese and Israelis to be close partners, while the Americans are viewed as "fair weather friends."

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GIVE ME WHAT I WANT, NOT WHAT YOU HAVE  
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¶21. (S/NF) Samora consistently informed the Embassy that he wanted special forces training and war college training for his staff. Our position was that NCO training was more critical, but Samora differs from this view. When CJTF-HOA constructed COLs Hurso and Bilate two years ago to push basic infantry training and urban warfare, which would significantly help NCO development and small units cohesion, Samora remarked that he was not in favor of the program and wanted a more intense special forces program. We could not comply, and, following the CNN report, Samora ordered the camps closed.

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HOW TO FIX THE RELATIONSHIP  
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¶22. (S/NF) We propose to do the following:

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-- 1) the Embassy, CENTCOM, DIA, DOD, DOD/OSD, STATE, CJTF and other actors must work together, coordinated by the Security Assistance Office at Embassy Addis, to support carefully and uniformly plans, training, procurement and activities clearly discussed and agreed to by all DOD and Embassy elements and by the interagency in clear agreement with the Ethiopians. On the Embassy side, the Ambassador, with the DATT, SAO, DCM, Political chief, USAID Mission Director, and ORA chief will review all projects, activities and procurement planned for Ethiopia.

-- 2) DOD and DIA must follow staff support and innovations by CJTF and clearly assign staff to the DATT's office and to the SAO office. The SAO office in particular has no local staff, while all other Embassies in the region do have support personnel in place. The SAO office needs two junior officers (two NCOs who understand SAO work) and at least two local-hire staff to process diplomatic notes and other routine work as well as interconnect with the Ethiopian military. Thus far, the SAO chief handles all operations as well as coordination back to headquarters himself. It is an exceedingly cumbersome, inefficient, and ineffective work environment.

-- 3) The DATT's office must also have staff to repair

relations and expand what has worked in our mil relations: information-sharing. Almost all of our visitors are now U.S. military. With 200 military TDY personnel, the DATT/s office has become a ticket agent and concierge service handling a continuous stream of visitors.

¶23. (S/NF) Final note: If we do not meet the pending storms, resolve past problems, and ensure we do not fall into similar problems, our military-to-military relations will remain challenging, and those areas of our military cooperation (intelligence-sharing, CJTF-HOA civil affairs projects) will be adversely affected. We need to act now and be fully committed. The Prime Minister asked us recently for assistance to help train the TFG forces (ref B). This is CJTF-HOA's advantage, but funding restrictions and lack of will to support a helpful partner will further erode military-to-military relations.  
YAMAMOTO